

[Proto Buddhism - The Original Teachings of the Buddha](http://buddhaoriginalteachings.blogspot.com/p/protobuddhism.html)

By Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Nayaka Maha Thera

<http://buddhaoriginalteachings.blogspot.com/p/protobuddhism.html>

Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, has spent more than sixty years of research, to discover the original teachings of the Buddha, by making an in-depth intensive study of both the theory as well as the practice of Buddhism.

Venerable Punnaji discovered that the original teachings were found in the Pali Nikayas preserved by the Theravadins, though not fully understood by them. Modern scholars were unable to get at the original teachings because they focused their attention on a later interpretation of the teachings called the Abhidharma and commentaries. There were several commentaries written by different schools of thought during the time of Emperor Asoka. What is today popular among the Theravada school is a collection of commentaries made by the Theravada school called Vibhajjavāda. Even reading the Theravada Suttas by learning Pali, the scriptural language, is not necessarily successful. This is because the interpretation of the Pali language itself is based on the later commentaries, which sometimes can be quite misleading. Moreover, the translations of the scriptures by Western scholars have introduced many interpretational errors due to language difficulties.

It takes a highly critical and intellectual person, with an excellent command of both Pali as well the English language, and who has a background of modern philosophy, modern psychology, and modern science as well as having tested and experienced advanced states of meditation to translate into English the deeper and profound teachings of the Buddha. The author certainly is very well equipped for this task. Venerable Punnaji is well versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge, including medicine, and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, modern philosophy and psychology. His interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism. No modern scholar has so far taken the time and energy necessary to be able to identify the elusive original teachings of the Buddha.

His mission has been to disseminate his findings through publications, sermons, workshops, conference presentations, Internet postings, and meditation retreats to a world- wide audience. He is well known for his clear and accurate presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over.

The three booklets – Ariyamagga Bhāvanā I, II, and III – is an effort to gradually introduce the essence of Buddhist meditation. It is both logical and comprehensive. A careful study of the contents will also expose the reader to many unknown or misunderstood teachings of the Buddha. This booklet also reveals how the Buddha solved the problem of existence, and how a serious practitioner could Awaken from the Dream of Existence – Nibbāna.

Venerable Mahathera M. Punnaji is a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka of the Theravada tradition. Bhante is a disciple of His Holiness The Madihe Pannasiha, the late Maha Nayaka Thera of Vajirarama, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya. Bhante Punnaji was ordained at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama, in his thirties. He obtained his training in meditation at the Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa.

In 1971 Ven. Punnaji was sent by his preceptor, the Most Ven. Madihe Paññasiha, to the newly started Washington Buddhist Vihara, the only Sri Lankan Vihara in America at that time. In 1977 he was invited to Boston and became the president of the Triple Gem society, where he taught yoga and meditation to Americans and conducted a research in Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy, in association with the Boston University and Harvard University. In 1980 he conducted a course in Buddhist philosophy in the University of Vermont, at the Living and Learning Centre. In 1981 he was invited to Canada to be the Abbot of the Toronto Maha Vihara. In 1974 he was invited by Mr. R. Premadasa (who later became the President of Sri Lanka) to be the director of the Mihindu Sarasaviya, a Buddhist Research Institute in Mihintale Sri Lanka. In 1977 he was invited to the Fo Kuan Shan Monastic University in Taiwan as a Professor of Buddhism. Since then he has been living in retirement in North America teaching meditation, Buddhist philosophy and psychology.

He studied modern science and Western medicine in Sri Lanka and he obtained two doctorates while in the United States, one is Western psychology and another in Western philosophy and comparative religion. Bhante Punnaji has made an in-depth research into the original teachings of the Buddha which he thinks is different from all the modern schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana including Zen and Pure- land Buddhism. This research was not only academic but also experiential. Bhante also did research into the form of Buddhist Psychotherapy which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world. As Buddhism in its original form was not a mere religion of faith and worship but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness.

Bhante Punnaji presents Buddhism as a growth technique that transforms an individual's disposition by changing a person's sense of values and goal in life while it also overcomes the stress and strain of modern living. Bhante points out that the teaching of the Buddha is about a conscious return to the original equilibrium which the normal person loses in childhood due to unconscious emotional impulses. This return to the original equilibrium called NIBBANA is achieved through a psychological technique of conscious evolution of the human consciousness where the human being goes through a paradigm shift and thereby transcends all human weakness and enters a superhuman "divine" state which all religions worship as "God". This means that Buddhism is a humanistic philosophy that recognizes the unity in all religions and defines "religion", "God" and "divinity" from a humanistic point of view. This also means that the Buddha has brought a saving message of hope to the world by introducing a very optimistic philosophy that guarantees a freedom from all human

weakness and suffering by means of a conscious human psychological techniques of growth and evolution of the human mind which brings results here and now.

Bhante Punnaji has many students in the United States, Canada and Europe who had benefitted from his teachings and who express their appreciation by speaking about the immense change in their lives for the better. Bhante is well known for his clear, accurate and original presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over/in many parts of the world.

Bhante Punnaji is well-versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge including medicine and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, philosophy and psychology. Bhante's interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism.

Bhante has played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhism in the West and is well known to Buddhist in Canada, United States and abroad. Sought by many as a resourceful spiritual guide, Bhante Punnaji shares his time between the Buddhist centres in Canada, United States, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other countries.

Early Life

Born Pushpananda Madawela on November 26, 1929, in Sri Lanka, Reverend Punnaji started meditating when he was five years old. As he grew up in Sri Lanka, he began getting interested in Buddhism while other children were starting school. He wanted to become a monk when he was seven, and knew he would become one when he was 17.

Growing up in Sri Lanka under his mother's religious upbringing, Reverend Punnaji became interested in Buddhism at an age when children were just starting school. However, due to his parents' wishes for him to do well academically and also his interest in science, Reverend Punnaji studied medicine and eventually became a general practitioner.

After a decade in practice, the deeply religious medical officer decided to hang up his coat and put on a saffron robe, passing all his belongings to his sister in the process. He was a doctor for 10 years when he decided to renounce all things worldly in life to become a monk at the age of 38.

He attributed the decision to his mother's influence, the monks he met and the Buddhist teachings he read.

"After I renounced everything, I came out of hell. Everyday life is full of suffering and unhappiness. As a monk, I don't experience these."

"It's something a layperson will find hard to understand," he says.

When he retreated to a meditation centre in a forest once, his friend visited him and asked why he wanted to suffer in such a place.

"I told him I was having the happiest time of my life. He couldn't understand.

"Meditation allows one to give up sensual pleasures, purify the mind and experience true happiness," says Punnaji.

Today, the senior resident monk in the Maha Vihara Temple in Brickfields is in charge of training young monks. He plans to teach them ways to examine Buddhism from a scientific view.

"Buddhism, in its original form, is not at all opposed to science.

"There's a correlation between scientific thinking, western psychology and Buddhism.

"I can show that the teachings of Buddha can be spoken in modern terms, not only mythical."

Discover the original teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Dr Bhante Mahathera Punnaji, please visit

<http://www.protobuddhism.com>

<http://www.bhantepunnaji.com>

[Email This](#)[Blog This](#)[Share to Twitter](#)[Share to Facebook](#)[Share to Pinterest](#)

- [Home](#)
- [In Memoriam](#)
- [Refuge & Observance](#)
- [Proto Buddhism](#)
- [Story of the Buddha](#)
- [Concept of God](#)
- [Psychotherapy](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Rebirth](#)
- [Vesak](#)
- [Anthology](#)
- [eBooks, Scriptures, Charts, Notes, Presentations](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Video Transcripts](#)
- [Audios](#)

